

Science, Trust, and Democracy: Communicating Health Challenges in a Polarized Era



A Symposium by
NORSE and RESISFORCE Networks.
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Time:
Friday October 24th -2025, 10.00-16.00





Location:
Norwegian Institute of Public Health,
Lovisenberggata 8, Oslo


Free registration
<https://nettskjema.no/a/524570>



Programme

10.00	Welcome	Fernanda Petersen Project leader, RESISFORCE and Ulf Dahle Project leader, NORSE
	Opening Session	Guri Rørtveit Director General, Norwegian Institute of Public Health Hans Jacob Rønold Dean, Faculty of Dentistry, University of Oslo
Moderator: Astrid Skiftesvik Bjørkeng, Senior Adviser - <u>Communication Section</u> , Faculty of Dentistry, UiO		
10:15	<i>Healthcare Under Fire: Navigating Institutional and Public Pressures in a Divided America</i>	Jeremy Samuel Faust Emergency physician at Brigham and Women's Hospital, Assistant Professor of Emergency Medicine at Harvard Medical School, Editor-in-Chief of MedPage Today, and author of Inside Medicine on Substack. Serving as a witness and spokesperson for the experiences of professionals in agencies such as the CDC, NIH, HHS, and USAID, Faust will highlight how these institutions and their employees navigate institutional and societal pressures in a deeply polarized environment, particularly under the current administration. 
11.00	Discussion	
11:10	<i>Beyond Compliance: Rebuilding Trust in Health Systems During Crisis</i>	Artem Horbachevskyi Head of the Antimicrobial Resistance and Infection Prevention and Control Department at the Public Health Centre of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine in Kyiv. As a direct witness to how war and crisis affect health systems, he brings critical insights into rebuilding trust, strengthening infection prevention, and advancing antimicrobial resistance efforts in Ukraine under the most challenging conditions. 
11.30	Discussion	
11:40	Coffee break	
12.00	<i>Turning the Tide: Lessons from Democratic Resurgence in Brazil and Beyond</i>	Torkjell Leira Norwegian human geographer and writer who recently served as Norway's Counsellor for Science in Brazil and author of several books like "The Art of Killing a Democracy: The Story of Bolsonaro's Brazil" In his presentation, he will provide a perspective on the current global trends in authoritarianism, drawing on research, case studies, and expert accounts. Acting as a knowledgeable guide, Leira will highlight how democratic institutions and actors respond to authoritarian pressures and discuss strategies for promoting democratic resilience worldwide. 
12.45	Discussion	

12.55	<i>Harnessing Social Media: Maintaining Trust When the Comment Section Contains Misinformation, Disinformation, and Conspiracy Theories</i>	Torunn Eilin Gjerustad Senior Communication Advisor, leads social media and communication for climate research at NIPH. She will discuss how NIPH maintained public trust and engagement on social platforms, even when confronted with misinformation, disinformation, and conspiracy theories, highlighting transparency and openness as key strategies for effective digital communication.	
13.10	Discussion		
13.15	Lunch		
Moderator: Kjetil Berg Veire, Deputy Communication Director, Norwegian Institute of Public Health			
14.00	<i>GLOCAL AMR Communication: Tailoring the Message to Cut Through the Noise</i>	Laura Alonso Irujo Communication Specialist @EUjamrai with 25 years' experience, on health communication, behavior change, and social advocacy, having worked with UNICEF, other UN agencies, and EU-funded projects. She will highlight strategies to cut through information overload, engage diverse audiences, and make AMR communication impactful and accessible, with examples such as the global AMR Symbol design contest that encourages public participation.	
14.30	Discussion		
14.35	<i>Behind the Scenes of 'Beat the Bug': Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned</i>	Edward Demicoli Communications strategist at the European Commission. He specializes in EU policy communication. In his presentation, he will also discuss the recent interactive EU game “Beat the Bug”, designed to raise awareness about AMR.	
15.05	Discussion		
15.10	<i>Bridging the Gap: Communicating the Intricacies of One Global Health in Animal and Human Disease Without Losing Trust</i>	Mari Marte Press Cand. Philol in Media Studies from the University of Oslo and currently senior communications advisor in the Communication and Public Relations department at the Norwegian Veterinary Institute. She presents the communicative challenges at the intersection of animal and human health, offering valuable insights on conveying the complex vulnerabilities of our shared health without creating fear or undermining trust. With extensive experience, including MRSA and azole resistance, she provides practical perspectives on engaging diverse audiences and fostering understanding of One Health issues.	
15.30	Discussion		

15.35	<i>Crisis Communication in Action: Insights from the Pandemic Response</i>	Christina Rolfheim-Bye Communication Director, NIPH. Experienced public health communicator with focus on emergency and crisis strategies for diverse audiences. She will present NIPH's work in crisis communication, highlighting examples from the pandemic and demonstrating how openness has been a deliberate and effective strategy.	
15.55	Discussion		
16.00	Closing remarks	Ulf Dahle	

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Biosketches



Jeremy Samuel Faust, is an emergency physician at Brigham and Women's Hospital and an Assistant Professor of Emergency Medicine at Harvard Medical School. He is the Editor-in-Chief of *MedPage Today* and author of the influential *Inside Medicine* newsletter on Substack, where he analyzes how political decisions shape health and science policy in the United States.

His reporting has broken stories on federal health budget shifts, research program cuts, mass resignations, and challenges to public health infrastructure, often ahead of major news outlets. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Faust became a trusted advocate for evidence-based medicine and transparent communication.

Today, his work focuses on how health systems and professionals navigate institutional and societal pressures in an era of polarization, particularly under the current administration. Frequently featured by CNN, *The Washington Post*, *Slate*, and other leading media, Faust has emerged as a leading voice translating the front-line experiences of clinicians and public health professionals into accessible insights on U.S. healthcare policy and practice.
@jeremyfaust



Torkjell Leira is a Norwegian human geographer and writer. Recently, he returned to Oslo after serving as Norway's Counsellor for Science, Technology, and Higher Education in Brazil. During his tenure in Rio de Janeiro, he played a key role in fostering and expanding research and innovation partnerships between Brazil and Norway across various scientific fields.

At the University of Oslo, Torkjell initially coordinated an environmental research program in the Brazilian Amazon and later led the Climate House project, a pioneering museum dedicated to climate research and climate change. His commitment to social and environmental causes is further reflected in his work with several Norwegian NGOs, where he focused on human rights, indigenous peoples' rights, tropical forests, climate change, family agriculture, and political mobilization in rural areas.

As an author, Torkjell has published three books on political and economic development in Brazil and the Amazon. The last, entitled "The Art of Killing a Democracy: The Story of Bolsonaro's Brazil" has been published in both Norwegian and Portuguese. Currently, he is working on a new book that explores successful democratic strategies in the fight against authoritarian regimes worldwide.

@TorkjellLeira



Torunn Eilin Gjerustad holds a Cand. Mag. in Communication and Media Studies from the University of Oslo. As a Senior Communication Advisor at the NIPH, she leads social media and overall communication efforts related to climate research and environmental public health.

Her communications work includes her role as program host of "Folkehelsepodden", and during the COVID-19 pandemic, Torunn was pivotal in managing vaccine communication on social media.

Her strategic oversight helped the NIPH maintain trust and engagement across digital platforms, reinforcing the institute's reputation for transparency and clarity in crisis communication.

Her responsibilities extend beyond podcasting and social media. She shapes climate research narratives for diverse audiences, including through engaging formats like podcasts, helping bridge the gap between scientific findings and public understanding. Her leadership in these areas reflects her commitment to thoughtful, open, and effective communication in the public health domain.



Laura Alonso Irujo is a communications specialist with over 25 years of experience in social welfare advocacy, behaviour change communication, and health communication. She has worked in five different countries with United Nations agencies, several NGOs, and EU-funded projects.

She began her career as a documentary producer and later specialised in communication for the non-profit and voluntary sector. In recent years, she has focused on bridging the gap between science and the general public, with particular emphasis on raising awareness of antimicrobial resistance (AMR). She was part of the communication team of the first edition of the European Joint Action on Antimicrobial Resistance and Healthcare-Associated Infections (EU-JAMRAI 1), and has also worked for the Spanish AMR National Action Plan. She currently coordinates the communication efforts of EU-JAMRAI 2, an unprecedented effort bringing together more than 120 partners from 31 countries to protect people, animals, and the environment from the threat of drug-resistant infections.

Among the activities she has supported to raise awareness about the importance of keeping antibiotics and other antimicrobials working, the organisation of a design contest to find the first global AMR Symbol holds a special place in her heart: a symbol that anyone can make at home and that everyone, anywhere, can wear proudly.

What motivates her every morning? Treasuring every opportunity to learn with her peers, developing creative and meaningful content, and reminding herself that every email, meeting, report, and piece of paperwork also contributes to building a healthier and fairer world.



Edward Demicoli is a communications strategist with more than 20 years of experience in EU policy communication. He currently serves as Communications Officer at the European Commission's DG Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE), where he leads the food portfolio's communication strategy.

Over the years, he has held several senior roles within the European Commission, including Head of Sector for Communication and Media at DG Migration & Home Affairs, and Media Relations Officer in DG SANTE, where he specialized in health and food safety communication. Earlier in his career, he was Press Officer at the EC Representation in Malta, supporting EU public communication in his home country during a critical period of EU integration.

Before joining the Commission, Demicoli was Communications Coordinator at Malta's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, notably during the country's run-up to EU membership, and Deputy Director at the Malta–EU Information Centre, where he played a key role in informing and engaging the public about EU accession.

He holds an MBA from the Maastricht School of Management and a BA (Hons) in International Relations from the University of Malta. His expertise spans strategic communications, media relations, and public engagement on complex policy topics, with a focus on health, food safety, security, and migration.



Mari Marte Press holds a Cand.philol degree in Media Studies and has over 20 years of experience in health-related communication targeting various public audiences, spanning human health, environmental health, and animal health. She has previously served as editor for several magazines that have addressed popular science communication in the areas of human and animal health.

She began her career as a communicator in the non-profit and voluntary sector, and for the past 16 years has worked at the Norwegian Veterinary Institute as a communication adviser. Her current focus at the Institute includes science communication, dissemination of EU-funded research, and communication related to wildlife health, all within a One Health framework.

Her motivation stems from a strong belief in the importance of making research accessible to the public, as a key factor in fostering trust and transparency in a democratic society.



Christina Rolfheim-Bye is the Communication Director at the NIPH and an experienced public health communicator. She specializes in emergency and crisis communication, developing strategies for diverse audiences to ensure clear, timely, and effective messaging during critical situations.

She holds a Cand. polit. in Social Anthropology with a specialization in youth culture and lifestyle, giving her a deep understanding of societal behaviors and audience engagement. She leverages these skills to make public health communication relevant and accessible. Over her career, she has led initiatives that bridge scientific expertise and public understanding, particularly in times of public health crises such as disease outbreaks and national vaccination campaigns.

Her work spans strategic communication planning, media relations, and digital engagement, and she has been instrumental in shaping NIPH's messaging during emergencies, ensuring that information is both scientifically accurate and widely understandable.